



# Rockport Millbrook Meadow Committee

P.O. Box 51, Rockport, MA 01966

[www.millbrookmeadow.org](http://www.millbrookmeadow.org)

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Laura Hallowell  
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*Samuel W. Coulbourn, Chair  
Marcia Lombardo, Treasurer  
Shannon Mason, Vice Chair  
Barbara Sparks*

## Annual Report for 2018



**Rockport's Mill Pond, after decades of clogging with sediment and plant growth, was restored, and its granite-lined banks rebuilt in 2018.**

**The year 2018.** The year began with completion of the dredging, which included removing over 3300 tons of dredged material, including 5000 sq. ft of cattails, to a landfill, and stonework on the rims of the Mill Pond and Frog Pond, including stairways on both.

In spring the contractor planted grass, plants and trees around the Mill Pond and Frog Pond. The Mill Pond returned to life as ducks, geese, frogs and turtles returned or came out of hiding.

Although the grass in the Meadow, kept covered with tons of sludge all winter, was slow to revive, the Meadow was again a favorite destination for children and adults, and dogs. Several weddings were held, as was the annual Acoustic Festival. The swing set and slide that children had enjoyed for decades was gone. The aged equipment was temporarily removed to make room for dredged materials and collapsed as it was removed.

**World Fish Migration Day** was held on the Mill Dam in April, with Eric Hutchins, NOAA Marine Biologist and Millbrook's environmental adviser, showed children eels and turtles and explained the elaborate migration of eels.

**The Annual Rubber Duck Race**, held by the Friends of the Rockport Council on Aging, took place in the Mill Brook in June. Next year the brook will be completely renewed and the duck race will be a new experience.

**Art Show.** Millbrook Meadow was the site for artists to paint canvases that were sold in an art show at the Rockport Art Association & Museum in September.

**Wreath Sale.** Millbrook Meadow Committee (MMC) held its third annual wreath sale to raise funds for a new playground for the Meadow.

**Restoration of Millbrook Meadow** finally began in November. As soon as the annual eel run ended, work began on removing the jumbled stones lining the Mill Brook near Beach Street, and SumCo Environmental, the same contractor that conducted the dredging, began to build a new Mill Brook, starting with a wingwall for guiding the brook into the culvert beneath Beach Street and on to the Atlantic Ocean.

***History:** Wampanoag Indians were known to have lived and hunted in the Meadow when it was a marshy wetland. **Richard Tarr**, the first settler in Sandy Bay, first landed on what is now Front Beach in 1690 and built his cabin nearby. The second settler, **John Pool**, chose the stream called Davison's Run, as a source of water for a grist mill and a lumber mill. That stream is now called Mill Brook.*

*Pool gained approval for his mill in 1702 and dug out and dammed the area which is now the Mill Pond. Tarr and Pool decided on Davison's Run as the dividing line between their two properties. For the next two centuries the Norwood family harvested ice from Mill Pond to provide ice for the Town and beyond, and the Brook and dam produced water power for mills that cut lumber, made organs, buggy seats, pianos, ground isinglass for clarifying wine and beer, and made glue. The family of **George Todd** donated the Pond to the Town in 1936.*



***Harvesting ice on Mill Pond, 1920s***

*Rockport's Garden Club gave the property now known as the Meadow to the Town in 1938. During World War II (1941-1945) the Meadow was used to plant many Victory Gardens. Right after the war it was necessary to modify Mill Brook to accommodate heavy storm drains from newly developed areas around the Boston & Maine (now MBTA) Railroad Station.*

*A channel was dug for the brook on the north-western border of the Meadow, and it was lined with granite blocks. In 1951 **Lura Hall Phillips** began efforts to save the Meadow from becoming a town parking lot, and over the next 40 years worked to protect and preserve this beautiful parkland. When she died in 1994, she left money in trust for the Meadow.*

*Over many decades Rockporters have enjoyed the Meadow for festivals, fairs, picnics, weddings, games and just fun. For over a century Rockporters have skated on the Mill Pond, and fished in it.*

*The dam between the Pond and Meadow, originally built in 1702 and constructed of granite in about 1840, blew out in 2006, and was finally replaced in 2012, and it was then that MMC and Rockport Garden Club, got together to plan a very comprehensive project to restore the area. **John Sparks** led this effort.*

*Construction of the new dam dramatized the poor condition of the Pond and the Meadow. The Pond was filled with silt, its original eight-foot depth now reduced to four feet or less and badly clogged with aquatic plants. The Meadow was often soggy, the Brook was clogged with loose stones and debris, and several large trees were dead or dying.*

***Barbara and John Sparks** led the Committee's drive to obtain funding from Town Meeting and from the Community Preservation fund. The Committee obtained \$182,245 from the Lura Hall Phillips Trust, and went to Town Meeting and townspeople voted \$60,000 in regular Town funds and \$100,000 in Community Preservation Funds (total of \$342,245) to begin the design work and detailed testing for restoration. Since late in 2013 Milone & MacBroom, a landscape architecture and engineering firm, has produced plans for restoration of Meadow and Pond and has followed up with the contractor on execution.*

*Town Meeting in 2016 voted at Spring and Fall sessions for a total of \$600,000 from Community Preservation funds, to dredge the Mill Pond. Town Meeting in 2017 voted to borrow \$360,000 in Community Preservation Funds to complete the project.*



**Kickoff Meeting for Restoration of Meadow Oct. 10, 2018**

**Fund Raising in 2018: Art Show:** The Conservancy began a stronger collaboration with Rockport Art Association & Museum with an art show. RAA&M artists painted pictures of the Meadow during the summer and took part in a gallery show from September 8 to October 2. Twelve paintings were sold and \$1006 came to the Conservancy restoration fund. In addition to mailings, the fund-raising efforts have included manning booths at Motif No. 1 Day, the Animal Relocation Day and Harvest Fest.

**Wreaths.** For the third year the Conservancy gathered a group of skilled artists to make Christmas wreaths and offered them to previous donors; net funds raised were \$8161. **Shannon Mason** led the project. **Terry Duffy** volunteered the use of his greenhouse for the wreath makers.

Since we began fundraising in 2013, we have gathered a little over \$500,000 in private donations. A listing of all donors is located on the Conservancy web site at [www.millbrookmeadow.org/giving](http://www.millbrookmeadow.org/giving).

**Membership:** Members of Millbrook Meadow are **Charmaine Blanchard, Laura Hallowell, Marcia Lombardo, Shannon Mason, Aileen Morrissey, Barbara Sparks, Frederick H. “Ted” Tarr, III, Stephanie Woolf** and **Sam Coulbourn**. Sam continued as chair, Shannon as vice-chair, and Marcia as treasurer. Laura Hallowell, who has served as an expert adviser on planting, and has led the project to eliminate invasive plant species in the park has done a marvelous job tracking myriad details of this restoration project in her role as Liaison since April 2014. Barbara Sparks, who has been a leader in all aspects of the restoration since



2012, took on the chairmanship of a new “Art + Play” subcommittee, ensuring that the new playground, and a public art play sculpture, blended smoothly into the finished Meadow. **New Member: Richard Lorigan**, a 23-year resident, requested to join MMC. Rich is retired from a career in the computer business as a manager of marketing and communications at Honeywell, Data General and BBN in the U.S. and Canada. He was a volunteer with North Shore Chapter of Habitat for Humanity, a volunteer with Thatcher Island Committee and drives for Meals on Wheels. The Board of Selectmen approved his membership on April 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Meadow Advisers:** **Gunilla Caulfield**, artist and writer, long-time custodian of the Lura Hall Phillips Trust, continues as our loyal supporter and adviser; **Eric Hutchins**, a marine biologist with NOAA who has also worked with MMC for decades, and led recent relocations of wildlife for each phase of our restoration, is our environmental adviser; **Frank Hassler**, a long-time head of the Finance Committee and expert on municipal finance; **John P. Campbell, AIA**, experienced in recently completing the Community House project for the Town; **Denise Donnelly**, Selectwoman, is our communications adviser; **Jamy Madeja, Esq.** is our environmental law adviser; **Randy Saville** is our history adviser, working with **William Tobin**, legislative liaison, to apply for national historic park designation. **Tom Mikus**, formerly an executive with Exxon working on solutions to global warming, and **Paul Makowski**, formerly a financial officer who helped found *USA Today* and served with other national organizations as well as Boston Public Library, are also advisers.

**Christopher DeRosa**, a horticulturalist and designer, who has helped MMC for years, has joined us as landscape adviser. **Heidi Caswell Zander**, artist and teacher, is our art adviser and liaison with Rockport Art Association & Museum. **Debby Coulter**, a wildlife activist who has taken on the role of an “explainer” of the wildlife at the Pond for visitors, is a nature adviser; **Jane Beddus**, an abutter to the Pond, provides “Pond News” on a whiteboard for visitors and is also a nature adviser. **Neil Emond** is also a nature adviser.

**Conservancy.** Since MMC, as a town government entity, could not serve as fund raiser, the Committee created a board for the Rockport Millbrook Meadow Conservancy. This Conservancy is an independent organization, qualified to solicit donations. The Conservancy Board works closely with MMC to provide their individual experience and expertise in the Restoration project, associated fund raising, and stewardship of the park in the future.

Members of the Board are **Dianne Anderson**, formerly of the Finance Committee and many other local organizations, and long-time volunteer with Rockport Music; **Tim Corrigan**, Owner of Earthworks Constructors and former member of the board of Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce; **Chester Clark**, retired business executive, former treasurer of the Educational Foundation for Rockport and volunteer for Rockport Music; **Karl Norwood**, Founder of the Norwood Group in New Hampshire, owner of property abutting the Pond and descendant of one of the early settlers of Rockport; **Maura Wadlinger**, retired banker and member of the Rockport Cultural Committee, and longtime volunteer with Rockport Music; **Barbara Sparks**, Member, Millbrook Meadow Committee, former President of Rockport Chamber Music Festival, former chair of the Planning Board; **Martha Jane Coulbourn**, former chair of MMC, and **Sam Coulbourn**, ex officio.

Selectman **Don Campbell**, who also lives adjacent to upper Mill Brook, represents the Board of Selectmen for the Committee.



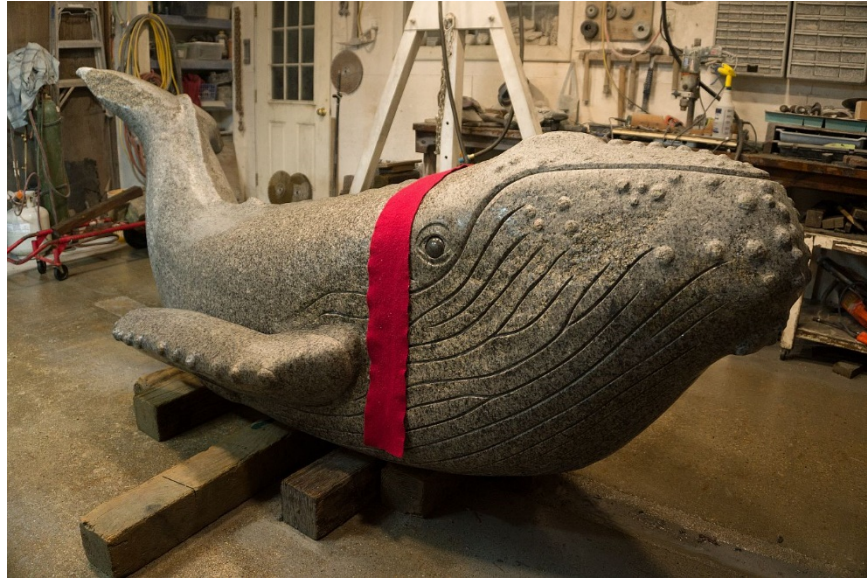
**Shannon Mason led the wreath sale to raise money for the playground**

**Fund-Raising and Outreach Committee.** **Shannon Mason** has continued as chair of the Restoration Fund Raising and Outreach subcommittee, with **Charmaine Blanchard** and **Sam Coulbourn** as members, as well as **Maura Wadlinger** of the Conservancy Board. Advisers are **Susan J. Gray**, past president of Rockport Chamber Music Festival and veteran board member of Rockport Music; and **Betsy Giannoccaro**, formerly fund raiser and grants coordinator for Rockport Music. The subcommittee has arranged for Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF), a tax-exempt organization qualified to accept tax deductible contributions to receive donations.

**Deaths in 2018.** **Martha Jane Coulbourn**, former chair of MMC and a long-time volunteer with Rockport Chamber Music Festival, a member of the Conservancy, died on September 1, 2018.

**Dr. Kimberly Jones**, formerly a member of MMC and a professor at Northeastern University, died unexpectedly on September 7.

**Frederick H. (Ted) Tarr III**, a member of MMC, descendant of the founding father of Rockport, and a lifelong champion of Rockport's green spaces, died on September 23.



Whale sculpture will soon be placed in the Meadow

**Plan for 2019. Meadow.** Construction of the new Mill Brook will include cutting a new channel which follows a slightly sinuous path near the old (1946) straight run, is modeled after the ancient watercourse, and is designed to alleviate the frequent springtime flooding of the Meadow. It is also designed to be friendlier to wildlife and people. Children will be able to get closer to the water, and there will be stepping stones for crossing in places. Water lines will be installed to allow watering of all the new plantings. Electrical outlets will be installed to provide service for large events in the Meadow.

**Whale.** Thanks to several donors, including the Rockport Garden Club, the Meadow will soon acquire a ten-foot long granite whale. **Barbara Sparks** led the effort to acquire an artwork that was compatible with the Meadow, and MMC chose a whale. MMC commissioned **Thomas Berger** of Kittery, Maine. Berger picked out just the right slab of granite from Johnson's Quarry and took it up to his studio to carve. The swim fins on the whale make it easier for children to climb aboard.

**Playground.** A sparkling new double climbing tower with two stainless steel slides, and a swing set are planned for the restored Meadow in 2019.



**Playscape:** Barbara Sparks is working with Christopher DeRosa to prepare detailed plans for features in the park that will attract active involvement for children. The new, sinuous and eco-friendly Mill Brook will lend itself to more visits by children, and the designs envisioned complement that. The centerpiece, along with the granite whale, is a new play area for children ages two through 12. It will feature a swing set with four swings and a double climbing tower with two stainless steel slides.

**Thanks to Rockporters,** our restoration is expected to be completed in 2019. We appreciate all your support, in sharing your ideas, in volunteering on cleanups, voting at Town Meetings, donating money, and all the other things you have done these past years!

Samuel W. Coulbourn,  
Chairman